

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

A regular meeting held at the La Quinta City Hall
78-495 Calle Tampico, La Quinta, CA

May 22, 2012

7:01 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. A regular meeting of the La Quinta Planning Commission was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairman Alderson.

PRESENT: Commissioners Barrows, Wilkinson, Wright, and Chairman Alderson.

ABSENT: Commissioner Weber.

STAFF PRESENT: Planning Director Les Johnson, Planning Manager David Sawyer, Principal Engineer Ed Wimmer, and Executive Secretary Carolyn Walker.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT:

III. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA:

IV. CONSENT CALENDAR:

There being no comments, or suggestions, it was moved by Commissioners Wright/Barrows to approve the minutes of May 8, 2012, as submitted.

AYES: Commissioners Barrows, Wilkinson, Wright, and Chairman Alderson.

NOES: None. ABSENT: Commissioner Weber. ABSTAIN: None.

V. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- A. Conditional Use Permit 2012-141: a request by Chris McFadden – Architect - for consideration of a Conditional Use Permit for site and tenant improvements for a VCA Animal Hospital within Plaza La Quinta located at 78-267 Highway 111 – the southwest corner of Plaza La Quinta and Highway 111.

Planning Director Johnson presented the staff report, a copy of which is on file in the Planning Department.

Chairman Alderson asked if there were any questions of staff.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked if the fencing was going to be installed using a concrete footing.

Staff suggested he verify that with the applicant.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked if any responses had been received from Vons. Staff said they have had no responses to the public notice.

Commissioner Barrows commented on the "Beware of Oncoming Traffic" sign shown in the exhibits. She asked if the new use of this building would involve more pedestrian traffic crossing from the parking lot and if there was a need for additional signage.

Staff pointed out the effect on this area would not be any greater with the new usage as it was with the former Lumpy's store. However, if there was an issue, it could be worked out later. At this time there was nothing proposed addressing any type of heightened pedestrian safety awareness needed from the standpoint of volume and activity.

General discussion followed on present and possible future signage; concluding with staff's offer to follow up on what signage was currently in the center; as well as the possibility of added signage to make people more aware of pedestrian traffic in that part of the Center.

There being no further questions of staff, Chairman Alderson asked if there were any questions of the applicant.

Mr. Chris McFadden, Architect, 75145 St. Charles Place, Suite 4, Palm Desert, introduced himself and offered the following comments:

- After reviewing the staff report, they were fine with everything.
- They would certainly be willing to accommodate additional signage in response to Commissioner Barrows' comments.
- Animals in the enclosed play area would be accompanied by an employee, and would be double-leashed.
- The fencing was a polymer resin, solid color, fencing with a stile-and-rail type of construction.

Commissioner Wright asked if there was going to be a 24-hour emergency area at this facility.

Mr. Craig Lassen, Regional Operations Director, P O Box 1489 Idyllwild CA 92549 introduced himself and said they had a 24-hour facility on Jefferson and Highway 111 at VCA Valley.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked if the fence footing would be installed in concrete.

Mr. McFadden explained it was a pylon that was set in and then spanned between the stanchions. It would not be set in concrete, but there was a concrete sidewalk around it.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked about the maximum occupancy of the building and plans for the clean-up of waste materials both in the play area and surrounding the building.

Mr. Lassen responded they had ward space for 10 animals with a maximum of 15. He pointed out they had less staff in their current space and they were all trained to monitor and manage the bio debris from the pets. He added they were very sensitive to the fact that they were near other businesses.

General discussion followed on:

- Allowing leeway on the maximum number of pets - up to 20.
- Bio waste is cleaned up "as needed".
- Patrol and clean-up of the area outside of the building.
- Animals are not left unattended.

Chairman Alderson asked for an explanation of the inset on the architectural floor plan.

Mr. McFadden said that was the electrical room in the back, and there were two alternate versions of interior space usage. He then deferred to Mr. Lassen who said they opted to use the version designed for intensive care.

Chairman Alderson asked, in response to Commissioner Wright's earlier question, if there was some provision to do emergency care.

Mr. Lassen said yes.

There being no further questions of the applicant, Chairman Alderson asked if there was any public comment.

There being none, Chairman Alderson closed the public hearing portion of the meeting and opened the matter for Commission discussion.

Chairman Alderson expressed his concerns about the Center's parking but concluded it would be relieved because of the building's location.

There being no further questions or discussion, it was moved and seconded by Commissioners Barrows/Wright to adopt Resolution 2012-011 recommending approval of Conditional Use Permit 2012-141 as submitted. AYES: Commissioners Barrows, Wilkinson, Wright, and Chairman Alderson. NOES: None. ABSENT: Commissioner Weber. ABSTAIN: None.

- B. General Plan Amendment 2012-124 and Zoning Change 2012-141; a request by the City of La Quinta for consideration of an Amendment to the La Quinta General Plan Map Changing Two Properties from Village Commercial to Major Community Facilities and an Amendment to the La Quinta Zoning Map changing the same two properties from Village Commercial to Major Community Facilities. The properties are located at 77-885 Avenida Montezuma and on the north side of Avenida Montezuma between Avenida Navarro and Avenida Bermudas.

Planning Manager David Sawyer presented the staff report, a copy of which is on file in the Planning Department.

Chairman Alderson asked if there were any questions of staff.

Planning Director Johnson pointed out a correction in the map shown: where it was noted as VC; it was actually Benjamin Franklin Elementary which was classified as a Major Community Facility. That was changed, by Council, a year ago. There were also other Major Community Facility zoned properties in proximity to the two being proposed for consideration.

General discussion followed on clarifying the designations on the map

and what properties and zoning designations were involved. There being no further questions of staff, and the City being the applicant, Chairman Alderson asked if there was any public comment. There being none, Chairman Alderson closed the public hearing portion of the meeting and opened the matter for Commission discussion.

There being no further questions or discussion, it was moved and seconded by Commissioners Wright/Wilkinson to adopt Resolution 2012-012 recommending approval of General Plan Amendment 2012-124 as submitted. AYES: Commissioners Barrows Wilkinson, Wright, and Chairman Alderson. NOES: None. ABSENT: Commissioner Weber. ABSTAIN: None.

There being no further questions or discussion, it was moved and seconded by Commissioners Wright/Wilkinson to adopt Resolution 2012-013 recommending approval of Zoning Change 2012-141 as submitted. AYES: Commissioners Barrows Wilkinson, Wright, and Chairman Alderson. NOES: None. ABSENT: Commissioner Weber. ABSTAIN: None.

VI. BUSINESS ITEM:

- A. General Plan Update; a request by the City of La Quinta for consideration of proposed land use and circulation elements of the General Plan Update, located City-wide.

Planning Director Johnson presented the staff report, a copy of which is on file in the Planning Department. He then introduced John and Nicole Criste of Terra Nova Planning & Research who would be discussing the General Plan Update.

Ms. Nicole Criste, Terra Nova Planning & Research, 42-635 Melanie Place, Suite 101, Palm Desert, introduced herself and said, as consultants, they were there to discuss two broad concepts: one in Land Use and the other in Circulation. She would present the Land Use portion and John Criste would handle the Circulation portion. She noted the General Plan Update had no major changes from the current General Plan, but there were some minor changes in land use designations. The general distribution of land uses was staying the same City-wide.

Ms. Criste went over the changes that were occurring from the 2002

General Plan. She pointed out the report included Table 2 which compared the land use allocations. She stated there were about 2000 more acres in the City Limits than at the time of the 2002 update; which was primarily due to the annexation of lands at the southeastern corner of the City which are developed properties now.

Ms. Criste then discussed the consolidation of land use designations in all of the categories at the general plan level. She pointed out (as noted in Table 1) the zoning designations would not change, but would be grouped together under a broader defined name for a land use designation. She then went into detail on how they would be grouped and what the changes were as noted in the Table.

Ms. Criste said in the General Plan, the definitions have been broadened to combine the very low and low density residential from the current General Plan into a low density category and the medium, medium high, and high density into the medium high category. All of the density breakdowns would remain the same in the Zoning Ordinance. The difference in acreage from current to the proposed General Plan, falls under several broad categories; some of the changes were because the City had lands that were designated vacant, at the time of the 2002 General Plan that have since been developed as Golf Course Master Plan Communities. Thus, the residential has become open space and there is less residential on the map than there was with the 2002 General Plan. There were also General Plan amendments during the life of the plan that changed both commercial and low density residential for specific projects and therefore caused a shift in the land use designations. There have also been several purchases by conservation organizations in Section 5 and those are now reflected in the map. Those in the current General Plan which were low density residential lands are now proposed to be designated for open space in the Draft General Plan because they are owned by conservation organizations for preservation under the Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP).

Ms. Criste said the City was required to look at long-range planning for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and automobile vehicle trips due to two State laws; AB 32 and SB 375. Those mandates led them to look at a sustainable community element for this Update which would be a separate element in the General Plan that currently does not exist. It addresses the full range of lifestyle and environmental preservation issues including: 1) the quality and type of

development, 2) ways that the City can preserve resources such as water and air resources, and 3) energy resources for future projects by building and proposing better projects. This led to mixed use as a potential future development concept to address some of these issues. There were lengthy discussions on whether it should be a mixed use General Plan land use designation, or whether it should be addressed in the Zoning Ordinance. Because the market will steer future development rather than imposing specific sites in the General Plan for mixed use it was more constructive and allowed greater flexibility to propose a zoning overlay and so you'll see mixed use is a requirement for zoning that will be placed on commercial properties of all designations. So that the development community and the market can look at the appropriate locations for that development and make those decisions based on community, and market needs and available land currently designated commercial.

Ms. Criste then described ways in which mixed use could occur and the forms it could take; both in residential and commercial areas. She said mixed use can take many forms and the general plan does not dictate those forms, but it allows the market and the development community to think about creative ways to improve access to jobs, shopping opportunities, transit, and reduction of dependence on the automobile and, by extension, improves air quality and the quality of life as a whole. She then deferred to John Criste to present the Traffic & Circulation portion of the report.

Mr. John Criste, Terra Nova Planning and Research, 42-635 Melanie Place, Suite 101, Palm Desert, introduced himself and said he would be covering Transportation, or traffic analysis, both of which were actually broader than just motor vehicle transportation. He added if the transportation system was not working well it could affect not only the local economy, because of tourists and visitors, but also the quality of life for residents.

Mr. Criste said with the General Plan concurrent with the development of the Land Use Plan we initiated a very detailed traffic modeling exercise. Circumstances have changed quite a bit since the 2002 General Plan Update. Since that time new legislation has mandated regional transportation planning. The City occurs within the SCAG region and the CVAG regional government agencies that have been involved in a Regional Transportation Plan which has been led primarily by Riverside County and has resulted in what's called the Riverside

Transportation Analysis Model (RivTam Model). And, we are obligated to do traffic analysis that is consistent with and a logical extension, of that modeling effort, so they worked with the traffic engineers to develop a very refined version of the Riverside County Model. He explained how they derived their traffic analysis figures by utilizing transportation analysis zones as well as the land uses in each of the Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZs) through the modeling process to generate the number of trips and where they were to/from. He went on to explain that when the County developed the model and had provided the latest run of the model on a Coachella Valley-wide basis, they had made some land use assumptions that were not actually embodied in the County's General Plan. And specifically, there were two planning areas, one was the South Valley Implementation Project Area which was centered around Avenue 62 and the other was the Vista Santa Rosa Planning Area. So, in order to have a real picture, based on land use, the model was adjusted outside of our own planning area to bring it back into reality with the assigned land uses in the County General Plan.

Mr. Criste said this detailed analysis was very complicated and had been pretty fruitful. This has resulted in a couple of things; one the realization that the improvements programmed in the 2002 General Plan would not meet all the new transportation needs to have the roadway network. One of the biggest changes made was Washington Street was brought back into reality with the addition of what could be done so Washington Street could continue to be a six-lane divided roadway. The current General Plan calls out eight lanes, but it was determined that was not feasible. Some intersection problems associated with Washington Street have been solved, but there are still four intersections and six roadway segments identified that have issues remaining and those are being worked on as noted in the exhibit you received. In addition the physical improvements that are possible along the whole network, widening streets, adding lane, things like that we're also both by necessity and by a desire to improve the quality of life is to try to encourage the development and use of other modes of travel. Transit is not yet used well in the area and there's plenty of opportunity to expand transit use. In the staff report there is discussion about transportation-oriented developments that put housing and job centers in proximity to transit so it can be used much more readily. Also transportation demand management strategies will be implemented in the General Plan. They include some complementary land use and also transportation systems management

which would make the current roadway systems more efficient. Also State law requires implementation of complete streets which gets communities to broaden the definition of transportation and to use street and other transportation infrastructure to accommodate other modes of travel. The effort is to take sidewalks, or multi-purpose paths, and bike lanes and make them carry more traffic. Thus encouraging the use of bike lanes, also for NEVs and golf carts with certain design requirements. The end result will be a system, a plan, and an approach that not only will address capacity issues and diversify the different modes of travel, but will also preserve the quality of life in the community and keep traffic down to a level where it can be controlled and managed. Some of the areas to emphasize this multi-modal and complementary land use development would be along Highway 111 and in the Village area. The staff report references some of the mandated legislation and there is a very complete and broad set of policies and programs that addresses everything from the general network right down to complete streets and much more specific issues.

General discussion followed on:

- Roundabouts and especially the one located at Avenue 52 and Jefferson Street.
- Safety statistics of traffic signals versus roundabouts.
- Multi-purpose and equestrian paths.
- Designated golf cart pathways.
- The Valley-wide Whitewater trail.
- The three types of golf cart path standards and accommodations.
- Accommodations for NEV's and bike lanes.
- Charging stations
- Number of trips a day at build-out of the City's General Plan; including traffic in and out-of-season and during major events.
- The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan

Commissioner Barrows asked if the updated General Plan and Preferred Land Use Maps were going to be available on-line now, or after presentation to Council.

Planning Director Johnson said it would be available later and then he gave a brief overview of the timelines/deadlines staff was targeting. He added, it was not currently available on-line, or for public

distribution, but that would be coming shortly.

Commissioner Barrows asked if there were any changes to General Plan Designations related to open space.

Ms. Criste said no, there were no changes. There was actually a little bit more open space than in the previous General Plan, due to the creation of golf courses, and the inclusion of land in Section 5.

General discussion followed on:

- The opportunity for a 5,000 (maximum) square foot commercial enterprise in the Cove; e.g., an old-style neighborhood store.
- Paths between residential developments.
- Residential with commercial on the ground floor.
- The electric vehicle cart path as it relates to the Highway 111, Adams Street, Dune Palms, and Avenue 48 areas.

Planning Director Johnson noted, on the last item, staff would look into the Classification for the Adams, and Dune Palms paths which would need to provide adequate accommodations for electric cart usage.

Planning Director Johnson presented his final comments on this item, as follows:

Changes in the General Plan: No dramatic departures are being proposed from the current General Plan. There are certainly some changes being proposed, some of which are mandated by the State of California, others from what we've read, heard, or have been proposed by other professionals.

Annexation: One thing that was not pointed out was the potential annexation area was scaled back considerably from what was proposed, or what was in the 2002 General Plan. That potential annexation area now matches our current spheres of influence. We think this is the right direction for the future of La Quinta and the issue was to focus on the quality of the community and to make sure that La Quinta continues to be a quality city in the Coachella Valley and the State.

Identification of Needs: Through the identification of the community's

needs we can make certain improvements to the infrastructure to add future opportunities, a different style of housing in our community, and to make sure the commercial sectors continue to be vibrant since they are a pivotal part of the City's fiscal future. The Updated General Plan seeks to make sure there are opportunities to accommodate future needs while making sure the quality of the "Gem of the Desert" is maintained in the future.

Road Intersection – Levels of Service: A considerable amount of time has been spent to make sure that the circulation element was properly represented, but one thing was not mentioned and that was there are a limited number of (build-out) intersections and road segments that cannot accommodate traffic at the City's normal level of service (Level Service D).

An Ambitious Schedule: There will be a City Council Study Session on June 5, 2012, where this information will be presented for Council's feedback. There will then be a one-day community workshop on July 11, 2012 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 8:00. The Draft EIR is scheduled for release on July 6, 2012, for a 45-day comment period and should be back before you, as a Public Hearing item, on August 14, 2012. It will be presented to the City Council on September 18, 2012. The Planning Commission will be receiving all of the documents well in advance of the meeting to provide ample time to review and consider all the information. Staff and the consultant team will be available to answer any questions (one-on-one) should those come up after reviewing the documents, which are fairly lengthy.

Feedback: Feedback from the Commission is certainly appreciated and thank you, in advance, for the amount of time you will be putting in to review this information and we look forward to the successful completion of the 2035 General Plan.

Chairman Alderson thanked staff and the consultants for their time and input and added that, since this was a discussion item, there was no official action needed.

Commissioner Barrows added a comment on electric vehicles and charging stations. The CVAG (Coachella Valley Association of Governments) received a grant from the California Energy Commission for the Regional Plug-In Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan. The purpose

of the plan was to work as a Region to identify where charging infrastructure for electric vehicles needed to go. At CVAG the Energy and Environmental Resources Committee was being designated as the Plug-In Electric Vehicle Coordinating Council and is also working with some industry members as well as the Electric Utilities Council and Councilmember Evans (serving on the Committee for the City). There may be occasions where they will be asking for input from the City as well. One of the biggest components of this program is an education and outreach element and there will be "Electric Vehicle 101" Workshops as well as other types of educational outreach. .

VII. CORRESPONDENCE AND WRITTEN MATERIAL:

A. None.

VIII. COMMISSIONER ITEMS:

A. Report of the City Council Meeting of May 15, 2012.

B. Chairman Alderson is scheduled to report back on the June 5, 2012, City Council meeting.

IX. DIRECTOR ITEMS:

A. None.

X. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioners Barrows/Wright to adjourn this regular meeting of the Planning Commission to the next regular meeting to be held on June 12, 2012. This regular meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m. on May 22, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,



Carolyn Walker, Executive Secretary
City of La Quinta, California